

LIGHTHOUSES OF MASSACHUSETTS  
THEMATIC GROUP NOMINATION

LIGHTHOUSE INFORMATION FORM

NUMBER 8

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116

PHOTOGRAPH KEY

Leslie Fox, MHC - 1981

1. Lighthouse from Clark's Point,  
Photo #1, by Fox, July, 1981

2. Aerial View, Photo #2 by the U.S.  
Coast Guard, Boston, date unknown

HISTORIC NAME: Butler Flats Light Station

TOWN: New Bedford

LOCATION: New Bedford Channel, Acushnet River

COUNTY: Bristol CODE: 005

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 10th

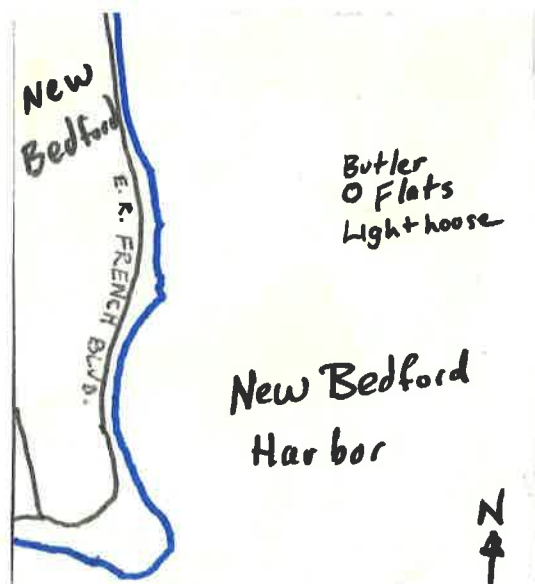
LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Bristol County Southern District  
Registry of Deeds (Book 174, p. 305,  
306, Comm. of Mass. to U.S.)

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination is confined to the light  
and its man-made foundation

SKETCH MAP



LAT./LONG.: LAT 41° 36' 3" N LONG 70° 53' 42" W

UTM COORDINATE: 19/341/800/4607/100

USGS QUADRANGLE: Prov., RI., Mass., Conn.

SCALE: 1:250,000

ACREAGE: Marine Site - less than one acre

OWNER(S): U.S. Coast Guard has right of way;  
maintenance done by the Coast  
Guard Commemorative Exhibit,  
New Bedford (private organization)

STATUS: Active/Unmanned

RECORDED BY: L. Fox/N. Salzman

ORGANIZATION: Mass. Historical Commission

DATE: August, 1981

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Butler Flats Light Station is located in New Bedford Channel at the entrance to New Bedford Harbor. Surrounded by water, it can be seen easily from the approach from the sea or from the Clark's Point Light (#12) at the very end of the peninsula, a remote end of the city of New Bedford. The peninsula, known as Clark's Point, has a scattered residential section, abandoned World War II barracks, a civil war fort, and a water-treatment plant.

Access to the lighthouse is made only by boat.

#### MAJOR ELEMENTS DESCRIPTION

The 53' caisson tank light was built on a marine site in 1898, and is a white and black cylindrical lighthouse that is very similar to the Borden Flats Light (#5) in Fall River. Butler Flats Light consists of a cast iron caisson foundation with curved wave deflecting plates at the top of the caisson. Butler Flats Light is unusual and perhaps unique among the caisson harbor lights in that the three story tower is constructed of brick and incorporates detailing of building architecture such as brick window sills and arches and raised brick below the watch deck level. The watchstanders room and lanternhouse are of cast iron construction. The tower was designed by F. Hopkinton Smith. Construction was completed April 30, 1898. It houses 1091 square feet: office space-201', housing-201': mess deck-254': storage or basement-530'; fog deck-78'; light deck-28'. This offers an example of the way in which the light station was used.

Until the station was unmanned, two officers and five enlisted men lived there and maintained the light and fog signal.

The light station was built on the soft mud bottom of the channel, upon which the concrete and filled stone foundation was placed.

Exterior: Access is gained from an iron ladder that leads directly up to the first balcony, or fog deck, that extends around the tower. There are at least three windows on this level, and a door leading into the tower. The fog or first deck is quite wide, and its roof is composed of many segments of steel and concrete fixed together. The Light balcony is located on the lamp room level. It is supported by Italianate brackets but the railing and balusters are of a simple design (though not a common one in New England). Nine thin iron vertical railings compose each section of the balustrade. Each baluster topped by a round finial.

Lens Room - The balcony around the octagonal lens room has a very simple iron railing that consists of single balusters and railings. It has an iron segmented roof (8 triangular segments) topped by the ball-shaped air vent and a lightning rod.

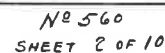
CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

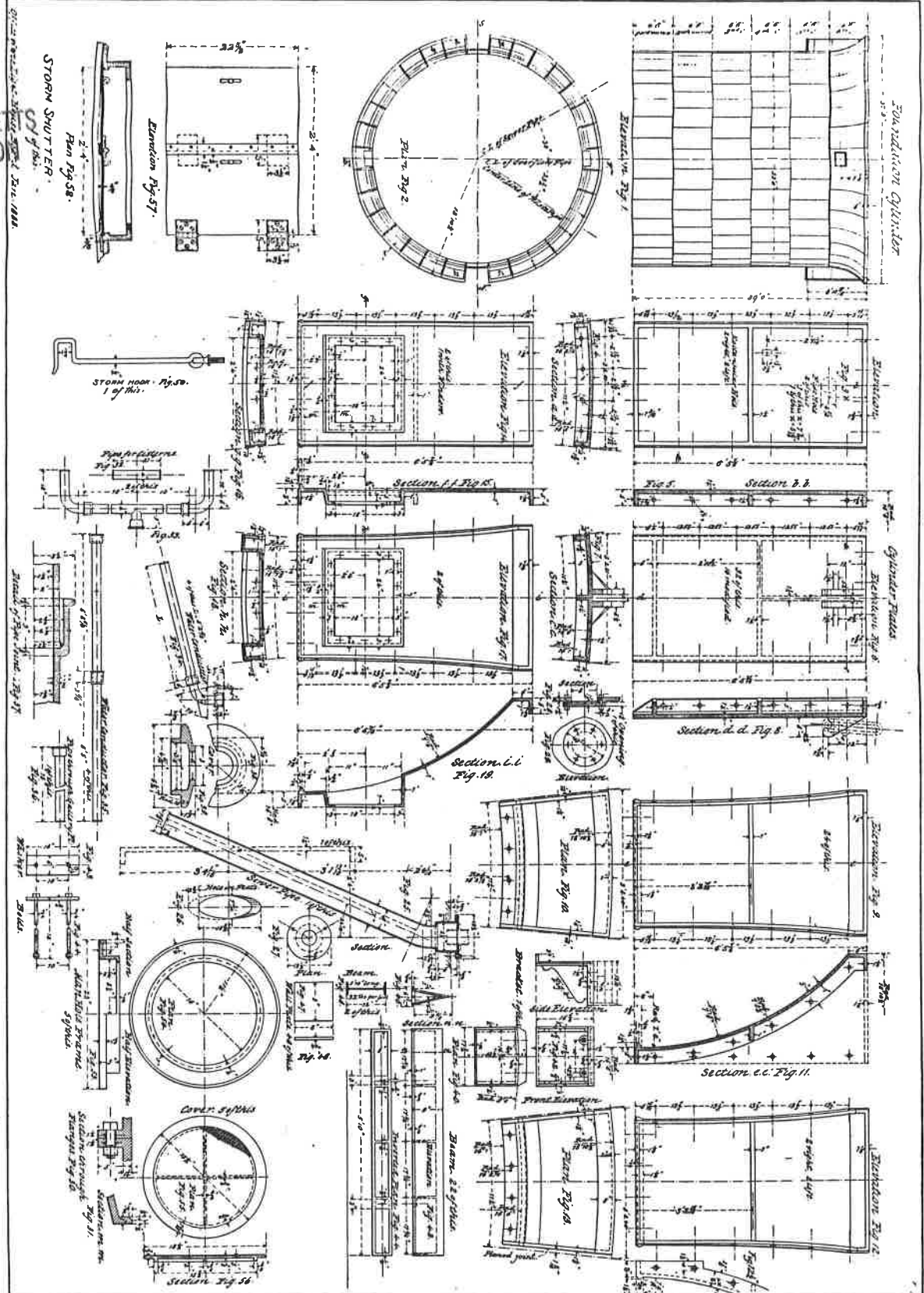
- 1898 - Station designed and built by F. Hopkinton Smith, "famous writer-architect-builder"; completed April 30. A navigational aid with lighthouse tower, light, and fog signal.
- 1975 - A local campaign was begun to save the lighthouse when the Coast Guard determined it was no longer required for safe passage into New Bedford, as the recently built Hurricane Barrier was more effective (1/2 mile closer to Harbor). A small dyke light was installed there.
- 1978 - The station was unmanned and fully automated by April, and automatic signals and a speed call 7843 encoder/decoder were installed. The fog signal was moved to the Hurricane Barrier. A private, non-profit group that had organized a successful New Bedford marine campaign for the Bicentennial (the Coast Guard Commemorative Exhibit) expressed interest in maintaining the light.
- 1979 - A Revocable License and Standard Department of Transportation Title VI Assurance was given to the city of New Bedford to operate the light as a private aid.
- 1981 - The Coast Guard Commemorative Exhibit plans to make necessary repairs and maintain the light.

Level of Significance

The Butler Flats Light possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship as well as important associations with the development of aids to navigation in Massachusetts. Erected in 1898, it is a well-maintained example of caisson type construction and the only one of its type designed by a known marine architect. The Station meets criteria A, B and C of the National Register of Historic Places. It also meets survey criteria 1c, 1e, and 4a.

*Plate 2.*







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of this  $h' = 2.1 \times 10^{-4}$   
 1.2 "  $h' = 3.6 \times 10^{-4}$

Festivals in Welsh Room  
1964.

Section p.p.  
Fig. 24

*Office of the Light-House Board Jan. 1868*

Section 9.9. Pg. 2

Elevation Fig 1

Cellar Windows 3 of this.

*Elevation Fig. 4*

Section

Dear Friends for 1722

— — — — —

Elevation - Fig. N.

SECTION P-P Fig. 4

in Fig 37. Rear View

var. Fig 11.



Section of Fig. 10

*Elevation Fig. 8.*

Closet Door Frame  
2 of this, and 1 modified in 3<sup>rd</sup> Store

Blavallan

Section 7.72

Front Elevation, Fig. 13.

ET. 2 of this, and one modified, for 3<sup>rd</sup> story

19-00000

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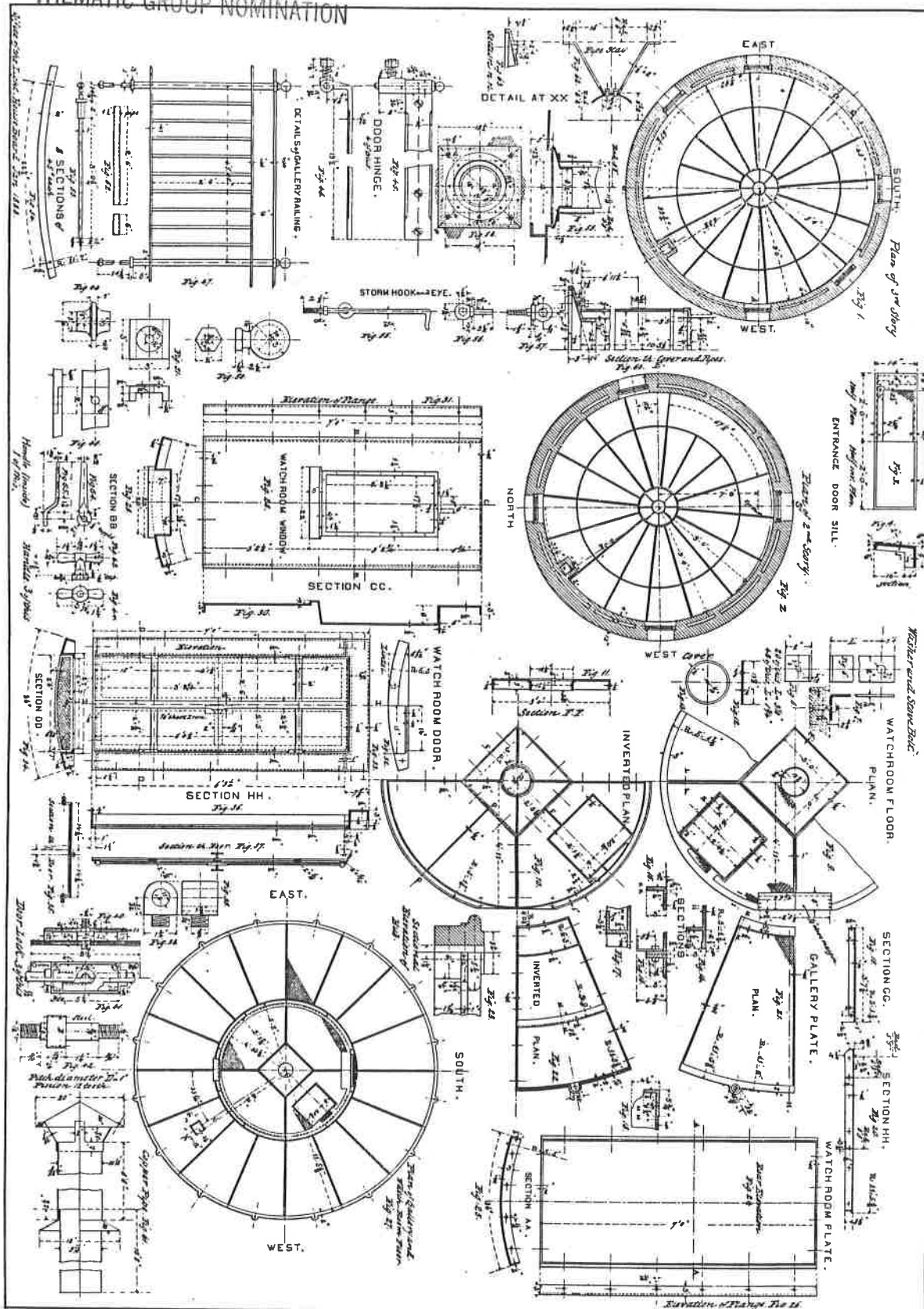
*Plate 9*

NO 560  
SHEET 9 OF 10

NO 560  
SHEET 9 OF 10



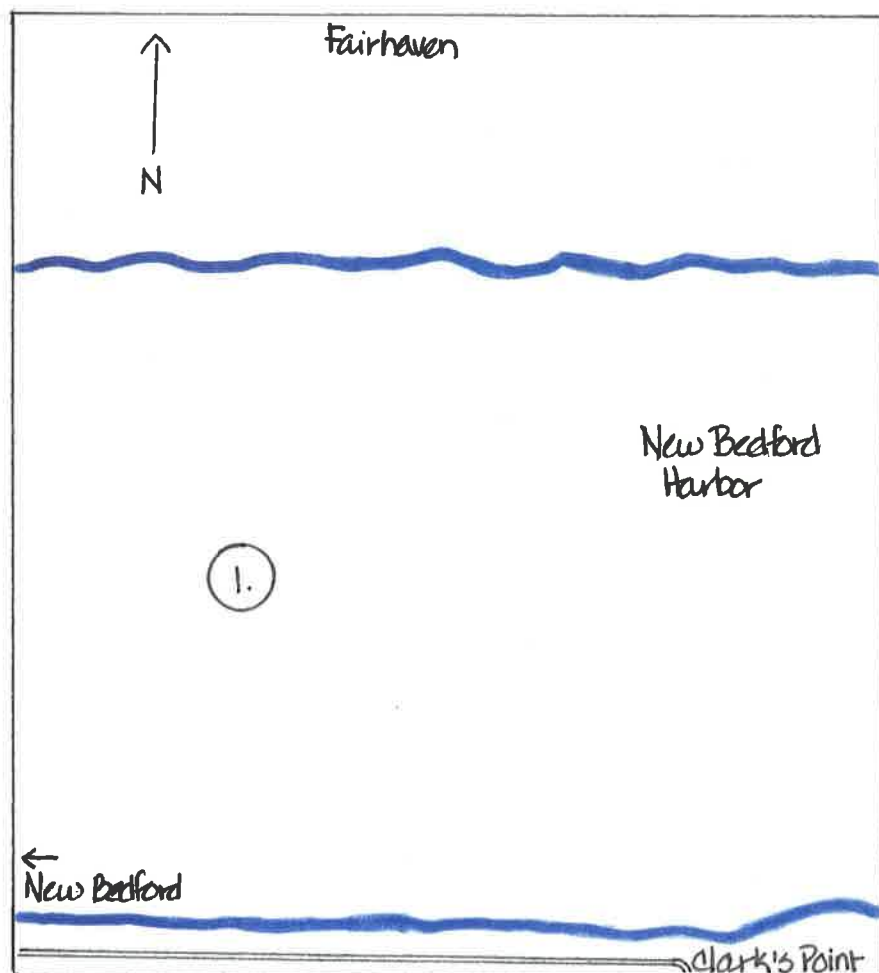
LIGHTHOUSES OF MASSACHUSETTS  
THEMATIC GROUP NOMINATION



Butler Flats Light Station, New Bedford Harbor, Mass.

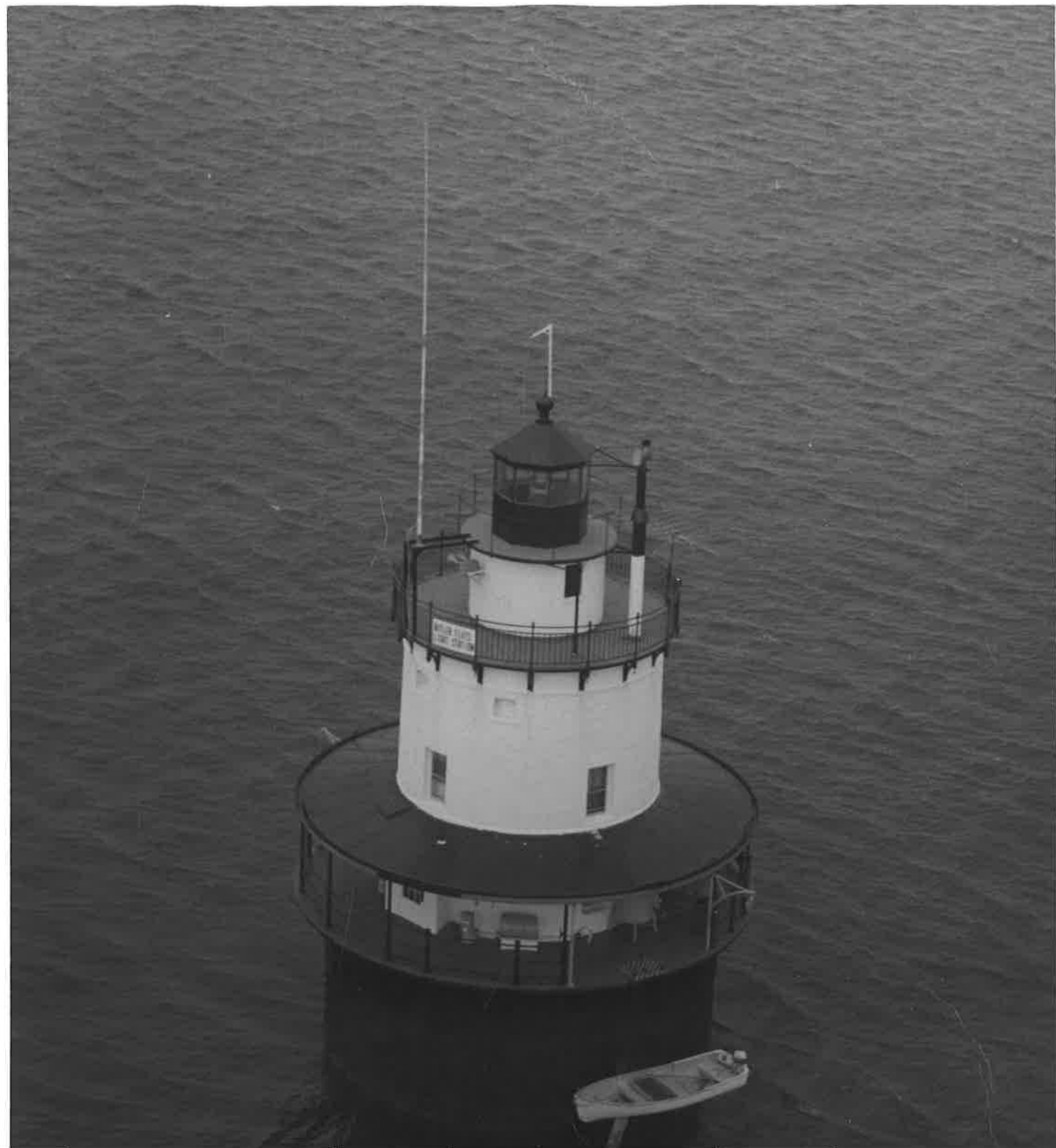
Plate 7

LIGHTHOUSES OF MASSACHUSETTS  
THEMATIC GROUP NOMINATION



Butler Flats Light Station

1. Tower





LIGHTHOUSES OF MASSACHUSETTS  
THEMATIC GROUP NOMINATION

BUTLER FLATS LIGHT STATION  
NEW BEDFORD #8

PHOTO #2 OF 2